

From: POLITICO Pro Energy [politicoemail@politicopro.com]
Sent: 5/3/2018 9:43:44 AM
To: Wehrum, Bill [/o=ExchangeLabs/ou=Exchange Administrative Group (FYDIBOHF23SPDLT)/cn=Recipients/cn=33d96ae800cf43a3911d94a7130b6c41-Wehrum, Wil]
Subject: Morning Energy: Emails from the land down under — Poll: Voters respond to Pruitt — Sommers tapped for API

By Kelsey Tamborrino | 05/03/2018 05:40 AM EDT

SCENES FROM THE SWAMP: Congress may be out this week, but congressional committees are still hard at work on probes around EPA Administrator Scott Pruitt. Ongoing investigations into Pruitt's travel spending and security arrangements were playing out behind closed doors as a trove of new documents circulated among the Republican and Democratic staffers on the Hill.

Staff of the House Energy and Commerce Committee, which oversees EPA, began receiving new paperwork from the agency this week, Anthony Adragna reports. That follows Pruitt's promise to Chairman Greg Walden that EPA would provide the panel with "all the documents and information EPA produces" for a host of ongoing inquiries into his conduct. And Pruitt's now-former security guard Pasquale "Nino" Perrotta — who reports suggest was a willing partner in Pruitt's spending on travel and security — sat down with staff from the House Oversight Committee on Wednesday for several hours. Staffers declined to comment on the substance of that interview, but an aide said Democratic staffers took part in the transcribed session and have access to the documents EPA has shared with the committee.

The administrator has maintained a low profile this week. He was not sighted at a swearing-in of Secretary of State Mike Pompeo, which several of Pruitt's fellow Cabinet members — like Interior Secretary Ryan Zinke — attended. Still, other newly issued documents offered a fresh look into his lobbyist and industry ties. The emails, which were released via a public records request from the Sierra Club, showed consultant and Global Impact Inc. CEO Matthew C. Freedman helped to set the itinerary for a planned trip to Australia for Pruitt, though it was eventually canceled when Hurricane Harvey hit Texas.

In the emails, Freedman warned EPA officials that Pruitt could get an angry reception from Australian officials who disagreed with the Trump administration on climate change. "I think that the trip will be more hostile than what the Administrator may be expecting," wrote Freedman, who now runs an advisory firm and is treasurer of the American Australian Council, a nonprofit whose members include Chevron, BHP and ConocoPhillips. POLITICO's Alex Guillén reports more on the details of the documents here. A draft schedule for the trip also included a visit and public appearance at the Australian parliament, though it noted such a stop raised "potential for protests, negative reaction." Trips to the Great Barrier Reef and Tasmania were also planned, dubbed a "bridge too far."

More to come? Democratic Sens. Tom Carper and Sheldon Whitehouse contended on Wednesday there were at least 3,100 pages of communications between Pruitt and special interest groups during his time as Oklahoma's AG that now have business before the agency and have yet to be released. In a letter to Pruitt and federal ethics officials, the pair says, the records, disclosed in state court proceedings, include 1,122 pages of "emails containing documents, amicus briefs, and legal strategy which are part of litigation files."

Grain of salt: Of course, Pruitt still has the support of the president, who has yet to weigh in publicly since Pruitt's testimony last week. And Sen. Jim Inhofe, a vocal ally of Pruitt, told a reporter from The Oklahoman that he believes Pruitt still has President Donald Trump's support. "That's the way President Trump is. He makes up his mind," Inhofe told Justin Wingerter. "It's kind of like Jeff Sessions ... about five different times I thought he was going to fire him and he never did."

GOOD THURSDAY MORNING! I'm your host Kelsey Tamborrino, and Bracewell's Frank Maisano was the first to correctly identify the eight countries the Prime Meridian passes through: The U.K., Spain, France, Algeria, Mali, Burkina Faso, Togo and Ghana. For today: Who was the first ever Cabinet nominee to be formally rejected by the Senate? Send your tips, energy gossip and comments to ktamborrino@politico.com, or follow us on Twitter [@kelseytam](https://twitter.com/kelseytam), [@Morning_Energy](https://twitter.com/Morning_Energy) and [@POLITICOPro](https://twitter.com/POLITICOPro).

SIGNED, SEALED, DELIVERED: The FEC is asking the SEAL PAC, a leadership PAC previously affiliated with Zinke, to give it more information about its donors. Pro's Ben Lefebvre reports that the PAC raised more than \$42,000 in increments above \$200 from donors in February who failed to adequately disclose their occupations, according to a FEC [letter](#) dated May 1. The FEC also dinged the PAC for waiting more than a month to provide missing donor information in previous filings. Read [more](#).

POLL: VOTERS TURN ON PRUITT: Respondents in a new POLITICO/Morning Consult poll turned more sharply negative on Pruitt after being told that he "is under investigation for ethical infractions related to the amount of taxpayer money he has spent while in office, specifically on travel, his security detail and pay raises for his personal aides." Respondents were also informed that Pruitt testified before Congress that "he delegated authority to make spending decisions to members of his staff." POLITICO's Steven Shepard [breaks down](#) how after being told that information, 59 percent of respondents said Pruitt had not conducted himself appropriately. Far fewer, 11 percent, said Pruitt had acted appropriately.

Also in the poll: A slight majority — 53 percent — said Pruitt should be removed from his position as EPA administrator, while 12 percent said he shouldn't be removed. More than one-third, 35 percent, had no opinion. "Although Republicans are dissatisfied with Scott Pruitt's behavior, they do not necessarily want him out as EPA administrator," said Kyle Dropp, Morning Consult's co-founder and chief research officer. "While 48 percent of Republicans say Scott Pruitt has conducted himself inappropriately as EPA administrator, only 38 percent say he should be removed from his position." See the poll topline [here](#) and the crosstabs [here](#).

SHALL I COMPARE THEE TO A SOMMER'S DAY: The American Petroleum Institute officially announced Wednesday Mike Sommers will replace Jack Gerard at the helm of the powerful oil and gas trade group. Sommers, who will take over for Gerard later this summer, was [reported](#) to be API's pick. He previously led the [American Investment Council](#) for two years, where he worked closely with firms invested in energy projects, and before that was chief of staff for former House Speaker John Boehner. National Association of Manufacturers President and CEO Jay Timmons applauded the news in a statement, calling Sommers "absolutely the perfect person to lead the oil and gas industry and the American Petroleum Institute to the next historic chapter." More from your host [here](#).

BISHOP TO TRAVEL TO PUERTO RICO: House Natural Resources Chairman [Rob Bishop](#) is traveling to Puerto Rico this week to survey the island's recovery in the aftermath of Hurricanes Maria and Irma, he said Wednesday. "This trip will help me better understand the continuing challenges and what disaster relief is still needed," the chairman said in a statement. Bishop is set to meet with Resident Commissioner [Jenniffer González](#) while there.

Separately, Democratic Rep. [Don Beyer](#) requested a hearing on the status of the territory's recovery in a brief [letter](#) to Bishop, writing the "committee has been silent," on a host of issues including the island-wide blackout and the privatization of PREPA, among other topics. A spokeswoman for Bishop called Beyer's claim that the committee had been silent "absolutely baseless, half-baked and politically motivated," noting that the committee has held multiple hearings, forums and sent letters on the topic.

MAIL CALL! THE ISDS OF MAY: API, NAM, the Business Roundtable and U.S. Chamber of Commerce joined together in a letter to President Donald Trump and other Cabinet officials on Wednesday on NAFTA, noting that though they support "efforts to modernize NAFTA to grow the U.S. economy and support American

jobs" they want the administration to retain the investment protections and the investor-state dispute settlement. Read it [here](#).

— **Congressional Western Caucus Chairman [Paul Gosar](#)** led a letter on Wednesday with fellow lawmakers calling on the president and agency heads to review all mineral withdrawals implemented by the Obama administration and to scrap any that were determined "without merit." Read the letter [here](#).

FOR YOUR RADAR: BLM on Wednesday released draft environmental impact statements for proposed changes to greater sage-grouse conservation plans in [Wyoming](#), [Colorado](#), [Idaho](#), [Nevada](#), [Utah](#) and [Oregon](#). Conservation groups say the amendments largely ignore the hundreds of thousands of public comments that were submitted to BLM asking the Obama-era plans be left alone. But a spokesperson for Interior told the Associated Press the proposed changes are largely technical in nature and arrived via feedback the agency received about the 2015 plans from governors in sage grouse states. Read [more](#).

FREEZE FRAME: The administration's plan to freeze CAFE standards at 2020 levels through 2025 would have an impact on fuel economy, oil consumption and GHG emissions, according to a new report today from Rhodium's U.S. Climate Service. The report found that freezing CAFE standards at 2020 levels would increase oil consumption in the U.S. by between 126,000 and 283,000 barrels per day in 2025, depending on oil prices. By 2030, the report finds, that impact would be 221,000-644,000, when assuming no change in post-2025 standards. Read the report [here](#).

HAPPY SMALL BUSINESS WEEK: The Citizens for Responsible Energy Solutions Forum will launch a video series today on U.S. clean energy companies that have benefited from ARPA-E funding. CRES Forum will begin the series with a video featuring Rita Hansen, CEO of Bend, Ore.-based Onboard Dynamics, a compressed natural gas refueling company. CRES Forum will roll out additional videos in the coming months. See today's video [here](#).

CUSTOMERS ONLY: While many discussions on grid reliability and resiliency focus on the bulk power system, a new paper out Wednesday explored a "customer-focused" approach, recommending a broader framework focused on customers' experiences. The paper, which was prepared for the Natural Resources Defense Council and the Environmental Defense Fund, discusses how when viewed from a customer-centric framework, the power system should be seen end-to-end, reaching from the customer "through distribution and transmission up to power generation and fuel supply." See it [here](#).

HIGH WIND MARKS: American Wind Energy Association's recently released market report found that utility and non-utility customers signed contracts for 3,500 megawatts of U.S. wind capacity in the first quarter of 2018, a "high water mark" in recent years. See the report [here](#).

GREENS SUPPORT STABENOW: Environmental groups, The League of Conservation Voters Action Fund and the NRDC Action Fund, [announced](#) Wednesday that they are endorsing Michigan's [Debbie Stabenow](#) in her bid for Senate reelection.

QUICK HITS

— Top Interior official resigned amid claims of intimidating behavior, [Talking Points Memo](#).

— Clean energy sector swings Republican with U.S. campaign donations, [Reuters](#).

— First federal reg czar opposes EPA 'secret science' plan, [E&E News](#).

— Arizona settlement with Volkswagen frees \$40 million for schools, consumers, [AZCentral](#).

— Ex-EPA Superfund chief says resignation won't slow down efforts, [Bloomberg BNA](#).

— Deputy Interior secretary keeps meeting with lobbyists for client of his former firm, [Huffington Post](#).

HAPPENING TODAY

9:00 a.m. — The Wilderness Society [discussion](#) on the role U.S. public lands play in the climate change problem and solution, 14th and F Streets NW

12:00 p.m. — The Heritage Foundation [discussion](#) on "Will the Iran Nuclear Agreement Be Ended or Mended?" 214 Massachusetts Avenue NE

2:00 p.m. — Middle East Institute panel [discussion](#) on "Oil in Iraq: Pathways to Enabling Better Governance," 1319 18th Street NW

CORRECTION: The May 2 edition of Morning Energy misstated the first president to invite amateur baseball teams to the White House. It was Andrew Johnson.

THAT'S ALL FOR ME!

To view online:

<https://subscriber.politicopro.com/newsletters/morning-energy/2018/05/emails-from-the-land-down-under-201273>

Stories from POLITICO Pro

More congressional panels digging through Pruitt records [Back](#)

By Anthony Adragna | 05/02/2018 08:12 PM EDT

Scrutiny into Scott Pruitt's ethics woes intensified Wednesday as a growing group of lawmakers' staff dug through reams of documents connected to the Environmental Protection Agency administrator's pricey travel and extensive security team.

Staff of the House Oversight Committee met for several hours with Pruitt's former security chief, Pasquale "Nino" Perrotta, who oversaw much of EPA's spending on perks such as first-class flights, a \$43,000 soundproof booth and round-the-clock bodyguards. Democratic staffers took part in the transcribed session and have access to the documents EPA has shared with the committee led by Chairman Trey Gowdy (R-S.C.), a Democratic aide said.

Staffers declined to comment on the substance of the interview with Perrotta, who has cited personal reasons for resigning from the agency Monday. Sources told [POLITICO](#) last month that Perrotta, a former Secret Service agent who worked in various capacities at EPA since 2004, was a willing partner in Pruitt's lavish spending on travel and security.

Separately, staff of the House Energy and Commerce Committee, which has jurisdiction over EPA, has begun receiving new paperwork from the agency this week. This came after Pruitt promised Chairman Greg Walden (R-Ore.) last week that the agency would provide the panel with "all the documents and information EPA produces" for a host of ongoing inquiries into his conduct.

"I can confirm that EPA has begun to share additional documents with the committee," a spokesman for the panel said.

Pruitt, meanwhile, has kept a low public profile since testifying Thursday before two House subcommittees — even as more questions emerged this week about his dealings with lobbyists. He did not attend Wednesday's swearing-in of Secretary of State Mike Pompeo, which several of Pruitt's fellow Cabinet members attended.

The New York Times and The Washington Post reported Wednesday that a former lobbyist for foreign governments had helped arrange a planned trip by Pruitt last year to Australia — a trek that EPA spent \$45,000 planning before he canceled it to deal with Hurricane Harvey relief efforts in Texas. The ex-lobbyist, Matthew Freedman, is a former Donald Trump transition team member who worked in the 1980s for Paul Manafort, who was briefly Trump's campaign manager in 2016.

A Republican aide to the House Oversight panel said EPA continues to cooperate with their information requests, offering five document productions to date. That includes more than 1,000 pages of records the agency turned over last week.

Separately Wednesday, two Senate Environment and Public Works Committee members — ranking member Tom Carper (D-Del.) and Sheldon Whitehouse (D-R.I.) — sent a letter to Pruitt and federal ethics officials alerting them to about 3,100 pages of unreleased communications between Pruitt and groups with business before EPA while he served as Oklahoma attorney general.

The senators said the records, disclosed in state court proceedings, include 1,122 pages of "emails containing documents, amicus briefs, and legal strategy which are part of litigation files," 1,754 pages of "emails containing documents, drafts of proposed rules, pleadings and drafts, legal strategy and data from investigations for cases in litigation," and 196 pages of "emails regarding personal matters not related to the transaction of public business."

"Each of these categories of documents may contain information directly relevant to your ability to do your job impartially," Carper and Whitehouse wrote. They did not release copies of the documents in question.

To view online [click here](#).

[Back](#)

Pruitt's security chief goaded spending, employees say [Back](#)

By Emily Holden and Alex Guillén | 04/12/2018 08:13 PM EDT

Environmental Protection Agency Administrator Scott Pruitt has had a willing partner in pushing for his massive spending on bodyguards and first-class flights, current and former EPA officials say — the Secret Service veteran who heads his security detail.

Pasquale "Nino" Perrotta played a key role in the investigation into mobster John "Junior" Gotti in the 1990s, and he's boasted of his exploits with women, firearms and luxury watches in a self-published autobiography. Now he's running security for the nation's top environmental regulator like a lavishly funded SWAT team, according to interviews with seven people who have worked with him under both the Trump and Obama administrations.

The current and former staffers say that rather than acting as a restraint on Pruitt, who came into the agency a year ago demanding round-the-clock bodyguards, Perrotta has instead egged him on — indulging his requests for a 19-person security detail, high-performance SUV, \$43,000 soundproof booth and bug-sweep of his offices, as well as first-class flights to limit his exposure to potential threats from fellow passengers. Perrotta has even barred all but a select group of agency employees from entering rooms and corridors near Pruitt's offices, according to Ron Slotkin, a career official who recently retired as director of the EPA's multimedia office.

Perrotta has also accompanied Pruitt on flights and offered him advice on environmental policy and other agency matters, according to two of the sources.

Slotkin said Perrotta and others around Pruitt strained repeatedly against any restrictions on their activity, including longstanding federal limits on spending and conduct.

"They would object to anything when we said, 'No, you can't do that' or 'That would be wrong,'" Slotkin said. He added: "We'd say, 'It's not a matter of legality, it's ethics, it's the way things look.' But they went out of their way to do something different."

Now Perrotta's own ethics are drawing scrutiny from members of Congress looking into Pruitt's actions. Five Democratic lawmakers alleged in a letter sent to President Donald Trump on Thursday that EPA issued at least one contract to an employee of Perrotta's private security firm, and that other contracts may have gone to Perrotta's "friends or associates," based on allegations from former agency deputy chief of staff Kevin Chmielewski.

Chmielewski, a former Trump campaign aide, has told lawmakers EPA fired him after he refused to retroactively approve first-class travel for one of Pruitt's closest aides, former agency policy chief Samantha Dravis, according to the letter from Democrats including Sens. Tom Carper of Delaware and Sheldon Whitehouse of Rhode Island. He also told the lawmakers that Perrotta threatened to go to his home to seize his EPA parking pass — adding that he "didn't give a f---" who might be listening to their phone call.

Perrotta did not respond to multiple requests for comment.

Agency spokesman Jahan Wilcox defended EPA's decisions on Pruitt's security arrangements, calling them "similar to security protocol across the federal government." He added that the agency had done similar security sweeps for former President Barack Obama's two EPA administrators, Lisa Jackson and Gina McCarthy.

"According to EPA's Assistant Inspector General, Scott Pruitt has faced an unprecedented amount of death threats against him and security decisions are made by EPA's Protective Service Detail," Wilcox said in a statement. "Americans should all agree that members of the President's cabinet should be kept safe from these violent threats."

Pruitt's spending, relationships with industry lobbyists and reputation for excessive secrecy have generated calls for his firing from Democratic lawmakers, some Republicans and even White House staff. But he still has at least a public champion in Trump, who tweeted last weekend that "Scott is doing a great job!"

To the contrary, the current and former agency employees say Pruitt has fostered an atmosphere of chaos, mistrust and disregard for optics — and that Perrotta has been a crucial part of it.

Several said Perrotta's personality and Pruitt's expectations are both probably driving EPA's security spending, adding that other key aides have signed off on the administrator's expenses either willingly or begrudgingly.

"He'll do anything to satisfy his boss," said one departed career staffer.

Perrotta was born to Italian immigrants in New York and has spent his life in law enforcement, including in the Secret Service, where he said he protected presidents and dignitaries and investigated financial and organized crimes, according to "Dual Mission," the autobiography he self-published in 2016.

In the book, he calls himself "completely misunderstood by most," including family, friends and coworkers, in large part because of his "high level of energy." Former and current colleagues have described Perrotta as rigidly loyal but also enthusiastic to push boundaries to get what he wants — an impression his book supports.

He recalls "creatively" finding ways to show probable cause to get warrants, providing financial incentives to police, and making sources of female "friends," "showering them with gifts that I was easily able to afford."

Perrotta said he also let women hold his government-issued firearm in romantic situations. "It was, in some ways, like a dangerous, forbidden sex toy to some, and I played right along," he recalled.

He said he liked the finer things, including a Rolex Submariner watch that he wore in his youth. When working for the Secret Service in Bulgaria, he wrote, he dressed "more like a gangster than law enforcement," clad in square-toed, black biker boots and a black, Italian-made turtleneck sweater with a ".380 Sig" gun tucked underneath.

He joined EPA in 2004. That eventually brought him into Pruitt's orbit.

Pruitt, a former Oklahoma attorney general, had built a reputation in conservative Republican circles for his frequent lawsuits against the EPA's Obama-era regulations, putting him at odds with much of the agency's workforce. And his penchant for lavish spending was documented even before he arrived in Washington: An audit in Oklahoma showed that expenses at the attorney general's office surged during his tenure compared with his predecessor's, The Intercept reported Thursday.

When Pruitt arrived at EPA after his confirmation in February 2017, his transition team had already made it clear that he expected around-the-clock security, a former agency employee who was there at the time said.

A week after Pruitt's first day at the agency, top staffers had a meeting on "24/7 security," according to calendars obtained by the watchdog group American Oversight. Chief of staff Ryan Jackson met for half an hour with security officials including Henry Barnett, the director of the criminal enforcement office where Pruitt's security detail is housed.

Perrotta was soon promoted to replace a career staffer who had pushed back on the administrator's desire to use sirens to navigate D.C. traffic. He quickly developed a close relationship with Pruitt.

As head of Pruitt's security detail, Perrotta has been instrumental in decisions for him to fly only first-class, upgrade to a souped-up SUV and have his office swept for bugs, a former Trump administration official said. Perrotta has also overseen Pruitt's 19-person crew of bodyguards, which is three times the size of the team that protected McCarthy — and offers 24/7 protection that exceeds what most Cabinet members receive.

"Mr. Pruitt thinks he's the president of the United States," said the first former career staffer. "He's big on image."

The office sweep for listening devices — which was conducted by a company linked to Perrotta — rankled some career staffers and led to a scuffle between Perrotta and a member of the agency's homeland security office at a meeting last summer, The New York Times reported Thursday.

Despite EPA's argument that Pruitt has received a record number of death threats, an internal report from the agency's Office of Homeland Security suggests that the threats mainly consist of letters and criticism on social media that don't warrant such blanket protection. (On Tuesday, the agency dismissed a staffer who had signed off on the memo and argued with Perrotta, for what it insists were issues dating back several years.)

But several current and former EPA staffers say they also consider the security fears overblown.

"We never saw any threat, never heard any threat," said Slotkin, the former multimedia director. "If anything, it came from Pruitt, we would hear him speak about it. But there was no evidence that anybody could even get near him."

That included many EPA employees: Slotkin said Perrotta cordoned off Pruitt's suite of offices inside EPA's headquarters at Federal Triangle, posting security guards to keep out anyone who wasn't on an approved list. One restricted area was a chandelier-decorated conference room named after environmentalist Rachel Carson where agency employees had previously been allowed to hold events, Slotkin said.

"He didn't want anybody near him," Slotkin said.

Soon Perrotta was flying with Pruitt and discussing matters that went beyond security, two former employees said.

"It wasn't uncommon that given travel and Nino's proximity, he would always weigh in on matters beyond his scope as security, leveraging his institutional knowledge," one said. "He often would say what he recalled prior administrators doing."

By the spring of last year, Perrotta was regularly attending travel planning meetings with top political staff, including a March 30 international scheduling discussion and an April 10 talk on international travel, according to EPA records.

He and other security agents were closely involved in planning in May for a trip the following month to Italy, where Pruitt visited the Vatican and then attended G-7 environment meetings in Bologna. Perrotta had lived for two years in Rome on Secret Service assignment, where he made many connections, according to his book.

Wilcox said the security arrangements on the Italy trip were not novel. "EPA's Protective Service Detail tried to replicate the same security measures taken when EPA Administrator Gina McCarthy traveled to Italy in 2015," he wrote.

Thursday's congressional letter offered a new detail about Perrotta: The Democratic senators said Chmielewski reported that Perrotta entered into a \$30,000 contract with private Italian security personnel for that trip. Records have revealed that expense but did not disclose whether it was for a private detail.

One of the former EPA staffers said Perrotta was friends with those guards. That source described Pruitt's protection while in Italy as extensive, with security agents from EPA and the U.S. Embassy, in addition to a large group of local agents.

News reports have revealed Pruitt also had a soundproof booth constructed for his office and considered having bulletproof desks installed.

And the spending isn't over. EPA also appears to be planning to purchase bulletproof vests specially designed to blend in underneath regular clothing for his security detail, according to a solicitation issued on Friday. The solicitation calls for 16 white-colored vests of varying sizes manufactured by Velocity Systems, along with

corresponding armor made of "special threat enhanced steel" and cummerbunds that provide enhanced protection.

The armor requested is just over a quarter-inch thick and can protect against the type of bullets shot from AK-47 rifles and some AR-15 semi-automatics, according to Velocity Systems' [website](#).

EPA would not confirm to POLITICO whether the armor is for Pruitt's protective detail or for other agents, saying only that all agents in EPA's criminal enforcement division, which includes Pruitt's detail, "are assigned bulletproof vests" and that the effectiveness of the vests expires every five years. But a source familiar with EPA's security operations said the vests are likely for Pruitt's bodyguards because of their unusual specifications and the number requested. Other enforcement agents wouldn't need their vests to be concealed, that source said.

To view online [click here](#).

[Back](#)

Lobbyist warned Pruitt of 'angry group of Aussies' [Back](#)

By Alex Guillén | 05/02/2018 09:17 PM EDT

A former lobbyist who helped organize a planned Australian trip for Scott Pruitt warned agency staff last year that the EPA administrator might get an angry reception from officials there who disagreed with the Trump administration on climate change, according to emails obtained Wednesday.

"I think that the trip will be more hostile than what the Administrator may be expecting," [wrote](#) Matthew Freedman, who now runs an advisory firm and is treasurer of the American Australian Council, a nonprofit whose members include Chevron, BHP and ConocoPhillips. Freedman was also a former Donald Trump transition team member who worked in the 1980s for Paul Manafort, the former Trump campaign manager who has been indicted in connection with his work in Ukraine.

Freedman's emails to Millan Hupp, an EPA scheduler and advance staffer who has worked for Pruitt since he was Oklahoma attorney general, show his close participation in planning Pruitt's visit to Australia, which EPA ultimately canceled after Hurricane Harvey hit the U.S. Gulf Coast.

Freedman wrote in July last year to Hupp that "the outright hostility may come to the surface more frequently than you might expect. He needs to be prepared for a more confused and angry group of Aussies."

The emails about the trip, obtained by POLITICO after being first reported by The New York Times, add to a growing list of questions about lobbyists' roles in arranging overseas travel for Pruitt as he pursued industry-friendly environmental policies for Trump. The release followed the Times' previous report about the role a lobbyist and close conservative ally played in setting the travel agendas for Pruitt in his controversial trips to Morocco and Rome last year.

Freedman also suggested a meeting with regional officials from the state of Victoria, but cautioned that the "outcome may be no different than if the Administrator met with Bernie Sanders." State leaders, Freedman said, "will be hostile to any Trump appointee," particularly on climate change issues and the Paris climate agreement, which Pruitt convinced Trump to pull out of.

Pruitt "will not find the local government meeting particularly useful or insightful for him," Freedman wrote.

However, Freedman did recommend sitting Pruitt down with Bill Shorten, the leader of the center-left Labor Party. Shorten is likely the next prime minister, Freedman wrote, "who is also a good friend."

What would be most useful, Freedman argued, are meetings set up through the Institute of Public Affairs, a conservative Australian think tank.

"They are aligned with the Trump vision on various issues, including coal, the challenge to businesses given the environmental approvals required, the unprecedented [government] control related to gas exploration/development, gas/fracking challenges," Freedman wrote. "These are the inputs/meetings that he should be focused on."

Freedman later wrote that he had contacted several companies for meetings, including aluminum maker Alcoa and ConocoPhillips.

Freedman also said he had spoken to Frank Fannon, then the head of government affairs for mining giant BHP Billiton in Washington. "Looks like their only interest at this point is a private meeting with the CEO in Melbourne," Freedman wrote.

Trump in January nominated Fannon to be assistant secretary of State for energy resources. He has not yet been confirmed by the Senate.

Other emails between EPA's Hupp and U.S. coal miner Peabody Energy that did not include Freedman indicated that Pruitt had considered a visit to the company's Wambo mine in New South Wales. The mine was too far from Sydney to drive, and a company executive noted no commercial flight would work out on the date in question. A charter plane would cost \$10,000, he told Hupp, who noted that EPA could not accept a "complimentary" plane ride.

They later changed the destination to another Peabody facility, the underground Metropolitan mine, which is less than an hour's drive from Sydney.

A draft itinerary for the trip also included a visit and public appearance at the Australian parliament, though it noted such a stop raised "potential for protests, negative reaction." That same day would also have included a stop at an event with lawmakers and fossil fuel leaders hosted by the Minerals Council of Australia.

Other planned stops for the trip included a meeting with a sports and environmental alliance on the "greening of sports," a tour of Sydney Harbor and a visit to Taronga Zoo complete with a "visit with koalas," per the draft itinerary.

The emails were released to the Sierra Club following a lawsuit.

Anthony Adragna contributed to this report.

To view online [click here](#).

[Back](#)

FEC seeks more info from Zinke's former PAC [Back](#)

By Ben Lefebvre | 05/02/2018 06:52 PM EDT

The Federal Election Commission is asking a leadership PAC previously affiliated with Interior Secretary Ryan Zinke to give it more information about its donors.

The committee, known as SEAL PAC, raised more than \$42,000 in increments above \$200 from donors in February who failed to adequately disclose their occupations, the FEC said in a [letter](#) to PAC Treasurer Paul Kilgore dated May 1. Donations of more than \$200 must include the contributor's employment, according to FEC rules.

"You must provide the missing information, or if you are unable to do so, you must demonstrate that 'best efforts' have been used to obtain the information," the FEC wrote in the letter.

Kilgore could not be immediately reached.

The FEC also dinged the PAC for waiting more than a month to provide missing donor information in previous filings. "These procedures were deemed incomplete," the FEC said.

The FEC's scrutiny of SEAL PAC has [increased](#) in recent months. The commission has questioned the PAC regarding all but one of the campaign finance reports it has made since the beginning of 2017.

Zinke launched SEAL PAC when he was elected to Congress in 2014 and separated himself from the group after being selected to join President Donald Trump's Cabinet.

WHAT'S NEXT: SEAL PAC has until June to respond to the FEC inquiry.

To view online [click here](#).

[Back](#)

Poll: Majority of voters say Trump White House running chaotically [Back](#)

By Steven Shepard | 05/02/2018 05:53 AM EDT

A strong majority of voters say President Donald Trump's administration is running chaotically after Trump's pick for veterans affairs secretary, White House physician Ronny Jackson, withdrew his name from consideration last week, according to a new POLITICO/Morning Consult poll.

More than 3 in 5 voters, 62 percent, say Trump's administration is running very or somewhat chaotically — nearly twice as many as the 32 percent who say it's running very or somewhat well.

A majority of Republicans, 68 percent, say the Trump administration is running well. But that sentiment is shared by few Democrats (9 percent) and independents (25 percent).

Moreover, the percentage of voters who see chaos in Trump's White House has increased modestly, but steadily, in recent weeks. In early April, 61 percent of voters said the Trump administration was running chaotically. In mid-March it was 57 percent, and in early March it was 54 percent.

Nearly half of voters, 49 percent, say the Trump administration has done a poor job when it comes to hiring and retaining qualified people — roughly twice as many who say the Trump administration has done an excellent or good job combined.

The new survey was conducted April 26-May 1 — in the wake of Jackson's withdrawal from consideration to head the Veterans Affairs Department, and as questions continued to swirl around a handful of other Cabinet members, including Attorney General Jeff Sessions and Environmental Protection Agency Administrator Scott Pruitt.

Of Trump's Cabinet officials, Sessions has the greatest name identification — and some of the highest negatives. Slightly more than a quarter of voters, 26 percent, have a favorable opinion of Sessions, while 41 percent view him unfavorably. (That ties Education Secretary Betsy DeVos, who also has a 41 percent unfavorable rating.)

Pruitt — embattled over what critics call profligate spending on personal items at EPA, including first-class airfare — is lesser known. Only 19 percent view Pruitt favorably, compared with 32 percent who view him unfavorably. Roughly half say they have never heard of him, or have heard of him but don't have an opinion.

But poll respondents turn more sharply negative on Pruitt after being told that Pruitt "is under investigation for ethical infractions related to the amount of taxpayer money he has spent while in office, specifically on travel, his security detail and pay raises for his personal aides." (Respondents were also informed that Pruitt has testified before Congress that "he delegated authority to make spending decisions to members of his staff.")

After receiving that information, a majority of respondents, 59 percent, say Pruitt has not conducted himself appropriately. Far fewer, 11 percent, say Pruitt has acted appropriately.

A slight majority, 53 percent, say Pruitt should be removed from his position as EPA administrator, while only 12 percent say he should not be removed. More than a third, 35 percent, have no opinion.

Pruitt isn't getting much backup from Republicans, the poll shows — though there isn't a loud drumbeat to remove him.

"Although Republicans are dissatisfied with Scott Pruitt's behavior, they do not necessarily want him out as EPA administrator," said Kyle Dropp, Morning Consult's co-founder and chief research officer. "While 48 percent of Republicans say Scott Pruitt has conducted himself inappropriately as EPA administrator, only 38 percent say he should be removed from his position."

Overall, voters want the Trump administration to do more to protect the environment. A 54 percent majority say the federal government should do more to strengthen environmental protections, even if it hurts some businesses. That's more than twice the 23 percent who say the U.S. should do more to help businesses, even if it weakens environmental protections.

A majority of voters, 59 percent, say the U.S. should be a part of the Paris Agreement, the deal reached between 195 countries to reduce global greenhouse gas emissions. Only 18 percent of voters say the U.S. should not be part of the Paris accord.

But a 43 percent plurality says the U.S. should not provide aid to help developing countries reduce carbon emissions in their own countries, compared with 31 percent who think the U.S. should provide that aid to developing countries.

Half of voters, 50 percent, say EPA is not doing enough to address the issue of climate change — roughly two times the 26 percent who say the EPA is doing enough to address climate change.

Trump's approval rating in the poll is 42 percent, unchanged from last week. And Democrats retain their 9-point lead on the generic congressional ballot, equaling the party's 2018 high water mark from last week.

The POLITICO/Morning Consult poll surveyed 1,991 registered voters and has a margin of sampling error of plus or minus 2 percentage points.

Morning Consult is a nonpartisan media and technology company that provides data-driven research and insights on politics, policy and business strategy.

More details on the poll and its methodology can be found in these two documents — Toplines: <https://politi.co/2HHsg55> | Crosstabs: <https://politi.co/2jj1BB4>

To view online [click here](#).

[Back](#)

Sources: API expected to tap Sommers as new chief [Back](#)

By Emily Holden and Eric Wolff | 04/30/2018 04:33 PM EDT

The American Petroleum Institute is expected to tap Mike Sommers, the head of a private equity trade group who worked as a top aide to former House Speaker John Boehner, to replace Jack Gerard at the helm of the powerful oil and gas industry lobby group, according to two sources.

Gerard announced his retirement earlier this year after a decade at the helm of the API, where he notched up a long list of achievements including overturning the decades-old ban on crude oil exports. He will step down in August.

API did not reply to a request for comment.

The oil and gas industry has so far gotten strong support from the Trump administration, which has moved to open the Arctic National Wildlife Refuge to exploration, is considering making wide swathes of coastal waters available to the industry, and last week said it would roll back some Obama offshore drilling rules.

But API has urged the White House to scrap its steel and aluminum tariffs, and to keep core provisions of NAFTA in place as it negotiates an update to the trade agreement.

Sommers, who was Boehner's chief of staff, has led the American Investment Council for two years, a position that kept him close to Arclight Capital Partners, The Blackstone Group, EnCap Investments and other firms that have invested heavily in energy projects. He also served as an aide to former President George W. Bush in 2005 at the National Economic Council working on agriculture, trade and food policy.

Barry Worthington, CEO of the United States Energy Association, which brings together public and private organizations, corporations and government agencies, said he'd been told Sommers would succeed Gerard.

"Jack Gerard is going to be a tough act to follow," he said.

Gerard was also one of the best-paid lobbyists in Washington, D.C. He received \$5 million in direct compensation from API, plus another \$1.2 million in perks in 2015, according to the group's latest IRS forms.

Marianne Levine and Ben Lefebvre contributed to this report.

To view online [click here.](#)

[Back](#)

API announces Sommers as new CEO [Back](#)

By Kelsey Tamborrino | 05/02/2018 04:35 PM EDT

The American Petroleum Institute officially announced it would hire Mike Sommers today to replace Jack Gerard as president and CEO of the powerful oil and gas trade group.

Sommers has led the [American Investment Council](#) for two years, where he worked closely with firms invested in energy projects. He also was chief of staff for former House Speaker John Boehner and served as an aide to former President George W. Bush in 2005 at the National Economic Council working on agriculture, trade and food policy. Sources [told POLITICO](#) earlier this week that the group was readying to tap Sommers.

"At a time of transformational progress when natural gas and oil are pioneering groundbreaking innovation, delivering tremendous environmental benefits and leading long-term economic solutions, I look forward to continuing the work of API's talented team and representing an industry that is directly enhancing the lives and improving opportunities for Americans and people around the world," Sommers said in a statement.

API's board of directors held an election this afternoon confirming Sommers atop the group, API said.

Gerard previously [announced](#) he'd step down in August.

To view online [click here.](#)

[Back](#)

Was this Pro content helpful? Tell us what you think in one click.



Yes, very



Somewhat



Neutral



Not really



Not at all

You received this POLITICO Pro content because your customized settings include: Morning Energy. To change your alert settings, please go to <https://subscriber.politicopro.com/settings>

POLITICOPRO

This email was sent to wehrum.bill@epa.gov by: POLITICO, LLC 1000 Wilson Blvd. Arlington, VA, 22209, USA